

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Paragraph beginning at line 7 of page 10 has been amended as follows:

With reference to Figs. 1-2, the barrel 2, which is a generally cap-shaped tubular member in this embodiment, extends in an axial direction along a longitudinal axis thereof and is attached to a forward end portion of the writing component 1 (e.g., a refill). The barrel 2 is preferably made of a plastic material and moves between a housed position (Fig. 1), where a writing tip 3 of the writing component 1 is housed inside the barrel, and a writing position (Fig. 6 as further described below), where the writing tip 3 protrudes from an aperture 4 formed at the front end of the barrel 2. In this embodiment, the barrel 2 can be slidably moved in an axial direction of the writing component 1. The barrel may be constructed so that, for example, it moves in an axial direction in a spiral movement by screw coupling the barrel to the writing component (not shown).

Paragraph beginning at line 3 of page 11 has been amended as follows:

An airtight sleeve 9 is disposed in the barrel 2 so that it surrounds the writing tip 3. More specifically, the

airtight sleeve 9 has an interior space defining an airtight chamber surrounding the writing tip 3 of the writing component 1 when the writing component is in the housed position. As shown in Fig. 4, the airtight sleeve 9 comprises a tubular member having a generally rectangular-shaped outer surface portion and a generally cylindrical-shaped inner surface portion. The airtight sleeve 9 is movable forward and backward between the advanced position and the retracted position in a predetermined range without rotation, and is fitted at a front portion of the writing component 1.

Paragraph beginning at line 22 of page 11 has been amended as follows:

The airtight sleeve 9 has a bore 12 at a front end portion thereof through which the writing tip 3 of the writing component 1 passes. The front side of the bore 12 has a slanted opening edge 13 which slants at an oblique angle of at most about 60°, preferably about 45°, relative to the longitudinal axis of the barrel 2. The airtight sleeve 9 also has a cap plate 15 which is pivotaly connected to a lower side edge of the airtight sleeve 9 at the bore 12 and which so that the bore 12 can be opened and closed via an integral plastic hinge 14 by pivotal movement of the cap plate 15. As shown in Fig. 4, the hinge 14 extends in the widthwise

direction of the cap plate 15 and, as a result, the cap plate 15 is closely and securely contacted with the entire edge of the slanted opening edge 13.

Paragraph beginning at line 7 of page 12 has been amended as follows:

A projecting rib 17 is disposed on a rear side of the cap plate 15 so that when the airtight sleeve 9 moves toward the retracted position, the projecting rib abuts on an inner side 16 of the barrel 2 to ~~rotate~~ pivot the cap plate 15 about the hinge 14 and press the cap plate toward the slanted opening edge 13. The projecting rib 17 may be formed in any appropriate shape. In the embodiment shown in Fig. 4, the projecting rib 17 is generally triangular-shaped in cross-section with one end of the triangle being connected to a central portion of the cap plate 15. Furthermore, the projecting rib 17 may be formed with a solid or hollow body. If the projecting rib 17 is formed with a hollow body having an appropriate elasticity, as shown in Fig. 4, or formed by using an appropriate elastic piece, the cap plate 15 can be closely contacted to the slanted opening edge 13 with effective elasticity.

Paragraph beginning at line 22 of page 12 has been amended as follows:

The barrel 2 has a window hole 18 through which the projecting rib 17 enters when the airtight sleeve 9 moves toward the advanced position. By this structure, when the cap plate 15 abuts on the writing tip 3 and is thereby pressed, the projecting rib 17 enters into the window hole 18 and the cap plate 15 is allowed to pivot ~~rotate~~ and be released in a direction to open the bore 12.